LABOUR MONTHLY

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Labour Conference Special

Thoughts on Socialist-Communist Relations ★ R. H. S. Crossman, M.P.

The Co-operatives at the Crossroads ★ Joseph Reeves, M.P.

G. D. H. Cole and Unity ★ James Klugmann

T.U.C. Programme ★ Frank Haxell

Labour Discussion Forum Announcement

October, 1956

One shilling and Sixpence

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MUCH TO LEARN

WHEN THE PRESS pretends dismay or derision at the idea of the right to work or maintenance, who does it think it's fooling? Only the youngest trade unionists, not yet fully up in the history of the British movement. Mind, it may be new for a trade union to endorse it as a central principle of union policy; but it is far from being new to us in Britain. Go back, for example, only to a conference in London held on January 27, 1921, where the right to work or maintenance was the central issue. It was to meet a sudden growth in what employers now prefer to call 'redundancy', then described as 'largely due to the failure of the Government to secure the resumption of trade with Russia and Central Europe'. Note the supporting demands: 'prohibition of all overtime in order to minimise the number of workers to be discharged'; the Government to bring 'promptly to an end its military adventures in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the East'; and to terminate 'military oppression and lawless reprisals in Ireland, which are stopping productive industry and lessening the economic resources of the country'. But whilst trade union executives were considering what should be done, the Government had trickily given the employers the All-Clear for a major wage offensive. The owners declared the first great Lockout against the miners. It had been foreseen. Knowing that if the Government and the employers could break the miners' resistance, wage-cuts and mass unemployment would quickly spread, the miners' partners in the Triple Alliance were pledged to strike in their support. But on Black Friday, April 15th, 1921, the strike was called off by the railway and transport workers' leaders at Unity House. Key man in that betrayal was J. H. Thomas. He was still at his post, ready to call off the General Strike in May, 1926. The cock crew a third time in 1931, when with Macdonald he destroyed the Labour Government and went over openly to the enemy. History has much to teach.

Ferment and Forum

BUT it was not a matter of a single leader; and Black Friday gave impetus to furious 'new thinking' in the movement—a ferment of discussion on how to build unity in place of disunity, about the way forward to socialism, the next practical steps. First, why had 'the big guns of the Triple Alliance failed to go off', in the words of G. D. H. Cole. Writing in the first number of *Labour Monthly*, July 1921, he said that 'with startling clearness the weakness and pitiful inadequacy of the British Labour movement stood suddenly revealed'. The Triple Alliance had proved 'a weapon which those in charge of it lack the courage to use.' Yet, he declared, 'The Citadel of capitalism will not fall at a blast of trumpets or the sound of a big voice; it will fall only to sustained and courageous assaults, in which

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Notes of the Month

Labour Into Battle

'So was brought to an end the period of co-operation between the Government and the leaders of the trade union movement which has lasted since 1939. The T.U.C. is once again an opposition body.' (The Times, September 6, 1956.)

'At the end of the debate on Suez the House of Commons was left in a deplorable state. . . . The two great parties were ranged, solidly and bitterly, against each other.' (The Times, September 13, 1956.)

ALL the conditions and prospects of the Labour Party Conference which opens at Blackpool in October have been transformed by the swift movement of the political situation. With dramatic speed the political situation in Britain has leaped forward, even at the same time as the menace to the people from the Tory Government's reckless foreign policy and disastrous home economic programme has increased. Only a year ago, at the last Labour Party Conference at Margate, the barometer was still at a low level. In face of widespread criticisms of the lack of a fighting policy James Griffiths had sought to reassure the socialist malcontents with the slogan 'Let us get back to the class room' as the marching orders for the next three years. But the class room has become the class battle. A new moment of opportunity has opened for Blackpool.

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Into Action

First in industry, then also in parliament and the political field, the organised labour movement has begun to move into action against the Tory Government. The stifling miasma of bi-partisanship, of the class truce in industry, and of front bench co-operation in parliament, has begun to lift. Not yet completely. Not yet on all issues. But the deadlock has been broken. The upward swing has begun; and the quickened atmosphere of political alertness and response at the first sign of a real fight has given the initial significant answer to the old charges of 'apathy'. The motor car strikers led the way in the summer, with the combined action of major unions on a common front, smashing the original refusal of the employers to negotiate. The Trades Union Congress in September followed this up with its united economic and political challenge to the Tory Government. The plain opposition of eight million trade unionists to the use of force over Suez, and demand for the recall of parliament, compelled the Government to reverse its previous refusal of Gaitskell's request for such a recall, and hastily announce the recall of parliament on the same day that the Trades Union Congress resolution was carried. The recalled parliament was no longer the same parliament that had backed the Government's initial measures over Suez. The dangerous confusion and ambiguities of Labour's parliamentary voice on August 2 had been dispelled by the united strength of the Trades Union Congress, voicing the demand of the people. Political battle was joined; and the division on Suez, compelling the Prime Minister's last minute partial correction (not reversal, not yet a real change, but a symptom of the strength of the opposition aroused) of his previous fully bellicose stand, dealt the first major blow to bi-partisanship since the war. The way is now opened for Blackpool to carry forward the advance with a great united campaign of all sections of the labour movement to bring down this Tory Government, before worse disasters follow from its bankrupt policy, and hasten the return of a Labour Government to carry out radical changes in policy at home and abroad.

Strikes and Politics

The way in which this lift in Labour's fighting strength has arisen is significant for the whole dynamic of the labour movement. It has not arisen from the elaborate pamphlets on policy for the 're-thinking' of socialism, which, however well-intentioned, have been composed in an abstract vacuum of sophistication, far removed from any leadership for action in the living situation. The measure of

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advance which has been achieved has sprung directly from the workers in struggle; and the struggle which has opened arose directly in response to the offensive of the employers and the Tory Government. The Tory Government's policy of deliberately worsening economic conditions, the credit squeeze to create unemployment and redundancy, the challenge of capitalist automation, the demand for a wage freeze alongside soaring profits, the attack on housing and rents, the lifting of the subsidies on bread and milk, the creeping inflation and blows of rising prices, had created mounting discontent among all sections, not least evident among the tenants and the housewives. But the tenants, the housewives or the old age pensioners had not the power to fight their battle in isolation. The first decisive blows were struck by the most militant sections of the organised industrial working class, which thereby demonstrated its role as the leader of the people in action. The resistance to the automation offensive, opening in the motor car industry, the direct repudiation of the wage freeze and the Tory Government's economic policy, and the extension of this stand to the whole trade union movement at the Brighton Congress, opened the challenge to the Tory Government, and prepared the way for the upswing in the political movement. All this carries a profound lesson for the academic 're-thinkers' of socialism, for whom, despite all their erudition in the fields of capitalist economics, the class struggle—and therefore the real dynamic of the labour movement—remains a closed book.

Lesson of the Car Strikes

There is no doubt that the strikes against redundancy in the motor car industry in the summer, at the Standards', the British Motor Corporation factories in the Midlands, and at Briggs', with the accompanying solidarity of other trade union sections, were the spark which lit the tinder of smouldering discontent and militancy and helped to prepare the way for the signal advance of the Trades Union Congress. The significance of these opening skirmishes did not lie primarily either in their scale or in the relatively limited concessions actually won. Their significance lay, firstly, in the character of the issues on which they were fought, as the opening round in the battle over automation, redundancy and the right to a job, and their success in this respect in compelling the most diehard section of the employers to abandon their original loudly proclaimed refusal to negotiate on these issues. Their significance lay, secondly, in the extension from unofficial action to full official nationally endorsed trade union action in this battle.

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A New Industrial Era

The Standards' 'unofficial' strike, that is, led by the shop stewards, was followed by the official Confederation call by the leadership of all the engineering unions on a national scale for the strike in the B.M.C. factories. True, the machinery was in certain respects rusty from long disuse. The failure to give sufficient support to the Standards' strike in the first instance was followed by delay in giving the official call for the B.M.C. strike so that the call came at a date and under conditions less favourable than an earlier call might have obtained. The disquieting level of continued working of a proportion of the workers, not only non-unionists, but some trade unionists, in certain leading factories, despite the official call, in the face of union pickets, and under the ignominy of massive police protection, revealed how much remains to be done, not only to eliminate non-unionism, but to build up anew the traditions of trade union militancy and class-consciousness, which have become partially smothered for some sections by the long years of official industrial truce and right wing class-co-operation propaganda, and have even become unfamiliar to many of a new generation grown up under these conditions. But the positive advance lay in the official union action and the enthusiastic support it won from the majority of the workers. The positive advance lay in the unity of the militant role of the two great general unions, representing wide sections of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, with the craft unions and with the main engineering industrial union, in the common advocacy and leadership of the strike. The positive advance lay in the solidarity of other sections of the trade union movement, the railwaymen, the dockers and the road transport workers, which played so important a part in compelling the retreat of the employers. All this revealed the opening of a new industrial era, in which the entire trade union movement is beginning to move into action to exert its strength to meet the challenge of the new conditions expressed in the offensive of the employers and their Tory Government.

Brighton Leads the Way

This was the new situation which found its reflection at the Trades Union Congress at Brighton. During recent years each successive Congress has revealed the advancing strength of the progressive forces of trade unionism, registering a consistent average vote of over three millions on major questions against the stand-pat right wing policies of the still dominant, but decreasingly representative, majority of the General Council. But this year the balance was

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turned on all the main home industrial questions; and even on international relations the General Council's condemnation of union delegations to socialist countries had to be abandoned, while the proposal for closer Anglo-Soviet trade union relations won three and a half million votes. The defeat on Cyprus revealed that the movement was not yet ready to consider withdrawal of British troops. On the key issues of home industrial policy the General Council had to abandon the battle, in face of the unity of all the major unions, and accept the militant resolutions on automation and wage policy; while, where it sought to give battle, on the 40-hour week, it was defeated in the vote. The General Council, so long as it continues to be elected in the present fashion, which leads to a result increasingly unrepresentative of the real proportions of opinion and tendency within the Congress, remains in essence the same dominantly right wing General Council. Hence it would be a misleading illusion to regard the victory of important militant resolutions at the Congress as already equivalent to a transformation of trade unionism and its central leadership. The battle is not so easily won. But the decisions of Brighton are a significant pointer of the direction in which trade unionism is moving.

Shifting Balance in Trade Unionism

What made the united or majority progressive decisions of Brighton possible was a shift in the balance among the major unions. To the key unions which had already consistently or in the main supported progressive policies during recent years, were now added, on various particular issues, other major unions, including the miners and the two general unions, on which the General Council had previously counted during these same years for its main support. The miners not only supported the unanimous resolutions on wages and automation and Suez, but also contributed to the three and a half million vote for Anglo-Soviet trade union unity, and to the victory of the 40-hour week resolution carried against the General Council. The National Union of General and Municipal Workers seconded the resolution of the Electrical Trades Union on automation. The Transport and General Workers moved the resolution, seconded by the National Union of Railwaymen, rejecting the Government's appeal for wage restraint. The new militant trend in policy expressed by the T. & G.W.U. was dramatised in general press treatment through the active role of its new General Secretary, Frank Cousins, and the contrast with the previous role of Deakin. But the measure of change was more than a question of personali-

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ties; it reflected the shift taking place in the situation; and indeed the same press observers noted that when Cousins was given the thankless job of defending the General Council's opposition to the 40-hour week resolution, he was not able, despite the immense popularity of his previous speech on wages, to carry a majority for the General Council against the militant desires of the majority of Congress. The successes of important militant resolutions at the Congress were the outcome of the development of the situation and of the whole trade union movement, and of the combined efforts and sustained campaigning of all the progressive elements, communist and non-communist, of trade unionism. It is only in this context, as part of a general advance, that can be correctly assessed the significance of the fact, commented on in the press, that the main speakers for the 40-hour resolution, on which the General Council was defeated, were communist speakers, leading *The Times* to describe this outcome as 'a victory for the communists' when it should have been described as a victory for progressive trade unionism.

A Political Portent

The Brighton Trades Union Congress was not merely a portent of new trends in the industrial field. It was also a political portent. The enthusiasm aroused by the united resolution rejecting wage restraint, with the united demonstration of support by all the major unions, and the acclamation for the fighting speech of Cousins, was not merely a declaration on wages policy. It was also a demonstration against the Tory Government. It was a demonstration against the entire economic policy of the Tory Government, and a call for an alternative policy. It was a call for an alternative Government based on the labour movement and the policies of the labour movement. Indeed, it might be said that Brighton, after all the previous vacillations and hesitations and unhappy introspection and divisions of policy in the political labour movement, by its confident aggressive note put the Labour Party on the map as the visible immediate challenger to Toryism.

Trade Unions and the Labour Party

This was still more evident with the resolution on Suez and its immediate effect in the political field, alike in the haste of the Government to recall parliament, and in the new fighting stand of the Labour Party leadership. The difference between the role of the Parliamentary Labour Party over Suez on August 2 and on Septem-

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ber 13 was not only a reflection of the movement of the situation and of popular feeling; it was also a reflection of the difference before and after the Trades Union Congress. The shift in the balance of trade unionism, with the new trends beginning to appear within those major unions on which the right wing was previously able to count for an almost automatic support, carries inescapable implications for the Labour Party, with its foundation in the unions for five-sixths of its membership. The advance of the progressive forces of trade unionism, with the role of responsible communist opinion and spokesmen as an integral part of that advance, gives rise to considerations which the responsible Labour Party leadership will need to take into account.

Blackpool's Opportunity

Such is the situation which has placed the ball at the feet of the Blackpool Labour Party Conference. Will Blackpool carry forward the advance so splendidly opened at Brighton? Three lessons stand out from the experience of the Suez debate and the T.U.C. The first is that, so soon as a fighting leadership is expressed in action against Toryism and the employers, there is no question of the united and enthusiastic support of all sections of the organised labour movement; no divisions of right and left tendencies or opinions stand in the way of or need prevent such unity in action in the immediate fight. The second is that broad popular majority support can undoubtedly be won for such a fighting leadership against the present discredited Tory policies, and offering an alternative for peace and the economic needs of the people. The newspaper polls on Suez have indicated the measure of this available support; and recent by-elections had already indicated a developing trend. The third is that to clinch this favourable situation, and to strike while the iron is hot, it is essential to press forward now and at once, with full vigour, the most active campaign, based on the unity and co-operation of all sections, for the rapid defeat of Toryism, and for this purpose to present already the essential features of an immediate alternative programme on which all sections can agree, and which a Labour Government would carry out at home and abroad. It is no use waiting three years for a policy.

Policy Discussions

It is in the light of this situation that we need to bring into focus the current discussions on policy, towards which the Labour Party Executive's three-year series of interim reports on various aspects

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have been intended to offer guiding lines. During these critical months, while the troopships and bombers gathered round Suez, or while the motor car strikers were fighting the menace of redundancy, the official discussion of Labour's future policy has appeared to proceed in an atmosphere of cloistered and academic calm, far removed from the vulgar realities of Britain's present position in the world or the hurly-burly of the class struggle. The first four of the elaborate three-year series of projected policy discussion statements from the Executive Committee have by now appeared, with the publication of the Reports on Personal Freedom, Equality, Colonial Policy and Housing, to come before this year's Conference. Problems of Public Ownership, the Ownership of Industry, Control of Industry and Social Services are held over for next year.

Re-Formulating Policy

Alongside these reports, various basic books or booklets by representative spokesmen have appeared, such as the Penguin *Twentieth Century Socialism* on behalf of Socialist Union, Gaitskell's *Socialism and Nationalisation* and Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism,* expressing in current terms the traditional revisionist view (which has been put forward in varying forms at different stages for the past half century) that modern capitalism is no longer the old capitalism, but a new kind of 'people's capitalism' with progressive features which render the old socialist analysis out of date. From a different standpoint G. D. H. Cole's *World Socialism Re-Stated* directly challenges the current official orthodoxy and pleads for working class unity through socialist-communist co-operation, including unity with the rising world of national liberation against imperialism. At the same time the Communist Party has appointed a Commission to prepare a revised version of its *British Road to Socialism.* Thus in one form or another all the left parties and spokesmen are engaged in an attempt to review and re-formulate basic policies and programmes in the light of modern conditions, both in relation to the aims of socialism and the means of their achievement, and the path forward for the labour movement.

Re-Equipment for Battle

The need for such fresh thinking and creative shaping of future policy, with the participation of all sections, is manifest. The Conservative Party, after the crushing electoral defeat of 1945, engaged in a very considerable re-formulation of its entire policy, alongside

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broadening of its organisation to reach out beyond its traditional upper class moorings, and extend its appeal to middle class strata, young people and sections of the working class; and this ideological rearmament, accompanying the first development of mass organisation, paved the way for the comeback of the past five years. The Labour Party, after the electoral defeats of 1951 and 1955, is now faced with a corresponding problem, to revive and renew the policy appeal which carried it to victory in 1945, and to mobilise a broader basis of mass support. On present electoral indications it may well be that, even in the absence of an effective campaign to hasten the defeat of the present Government, the normal swing of disillusionment with two Conservative Governments might eventually lead, at the expiry of this Government's term, to the return of a Labour Government. But two urgent questions cut across the passivity of such an approach of merely waiting for the swing of the pendulum. First, can we afford to envisage the disastrous consequences of three more years of Tory rule, rather than do everything to mobilise support to hasten the downfall of this Tory Government before worse consequences follow? Second, if and when a new Labour Government is returned, what is to be the programme of such a new Labour Government? To this there is no clear answer yet, and the most varying views are offered.

Taking a Long View?

All the current manifold contributions to the discussion of policy open out a wide variety of questions, especially on long term issues of the ultimate aims or conceptions of socialism, which inevitably arise at the present stage when doubts have begun to be thrown on the traditional aims of the movement, and to which it will be necessary to return at leisure for fuller consideration. But one preliminary observation may be made on the general character of these policy discussion statements so far put out by the Executive, and on the probable reason why, with the exception of the statement on Housing, they appear to have made, so far as can be ascertained, very little impact on actual discussion in the constituency labour parties and in trade union circles. This general characteristic—again with the exception of the statement on Housing which does present a specific policy for discussion—lies in a peculiar character of abstract remoteness from the urgent manifest problems of the objective situation and the working class movement in Britain. An elaborate series of generalised conceptions of the relations of 'the individual' and 'society' and 'equality' and 'capitalism' and 'social-

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ism' and 'plural societies' revolves in an endless dance, all of which appears to have very little relation to the actual world familiar to the ordinary man, the world of redundancy, wage-demands, profit sprees, rising prices, crippling armaments, colonial wars or Suez crises.

Theory and Practice

It may be that the last word of wisdom is not contained in the vulgar saying that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory: that depends upon the theory. But theory can assuredly only be of value insofar as it is linked with practice, and helps to sharpen our weapons to grapple with the real world. When we hear of a Labour Party Report on 'Personal Liberty' we naturally expect to be given the Labour view on the concentration camps in Malaya or detention without trial in Kenya or the deportation of Archbishop Makarios; we are somewhat startled to be informed at the outset, in a pamphlet of a leading party of the British imperialist system on 'Personal Liberty' that the colonies (i.e. the majority of the population ruled from London) are excluded from consideration in this report ('we do not refer to civil liberties in the colonies—a vital matter to be dealt with in a separate study'—Introductory Note). If we turn hopefully to the pamphlet entitled 'Labour's Colonial Policy', we might expect to have some definition of Labour's attitude to the colonial wars in Malaya, Kenya or Cyprus; but we find that we are fobbed off with an elaborate philosophical disquisition on the problem of 'multi-racial societies' (how to mete out equal justice to 50,000 European Kenya settlers and five million Kenya Africans) as a reason for delaying independence or even self-government. When we turn to 'Equality' and 'A Policy for Social Justice', and find a not inexact statement of the overwhelming concentration of the class ownership of wealth in Britain (a concentration, according to their statistics, even narrower and in fewer hands than Chiozza Money found half a century ago, so that all the taxation measures have not changed the trend), we expect to hear some proposals how to transform this class ownership into social ownership in order to end inequality; instead, we are given some proposals for fiscal reform to prevent tax evasion by the rich. So the dance goes on. Nowhere do we find any attempt to examine the problems of Britain's position in the world, of British imperialism, of Britain's economic crisis and future, or of the working class struggle against capitalism. It must be said that these general theoretical pamphlets seem to have been written by dons for dons, and to have very little connection with the labour movement.

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Controversies on Socialism

It is inevitable that in the present phase wide controversies have developed on the conception of socialism and the long-term aims of the labour movement. The reason for these renewed controversies on what was once taken for granted by all sections as agreed common ground (the conventional familiar definitions of socialism as the social ownership of the means of production, as defined in the Labour Party Constitution) springs from the current experience of the modern period. In the earlier popular socialist propaganda of the non-Marxist majority of the labour movement a relatively simple picture was presented that the political labour movement would advance step by step to an absolute majority in parliament and would then proceed to end capitalism and establish the social ownership of the means of production. Modern experience, after the absolute parliamentary majority had been reached for the six years 1945-51, has shown that this simple picture of the early propaganda has not worked out in practice. It is now common ground, agreed and even emphasised by the representatives of all tendencies, that the Labour Government of 1945-51, whatever reforms it accomplished, made no change in the class ownership of wealth, and finally gave way to Toryism, the party dominated by the class interests of the wealthy. Hence inevitably the question has arisen and is canvassed from every viewpoint: What conclusion do we draw from this experience? What has happened to our aim? Where do we go from here?

Right Wing Viewpoint

Two general types of alternative conclusion are drawn from this experience, and correspond to the viewpoints of what is usually described as the 'right wing' and the 'left wing'. The right wing draws the conclusion that it was a mistake, within the conditions of constitutional parliamentary evolution, to set the aim of general social ownership of the means of production, and that the fulfilment of this aim would mean 'totalitarianism'. Hence they advocate the substitution of the aim of a modified type of harmonious capitalism, with a considerable state sector alongside predominantly private enterprise, full employment, extended social services, less inequalities of wealth and greater equality of opportunity. Their propaganda is reinforced by the present phase of capitalist full employment, giving rise, as in all periods of capitalist boom, to temporary new illusions in a harmonious capitalism. In this connection it may be noted incidentally that the successive phases of Strachey's develop-

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ment, during the twenties, the thirties and today, are an excellent barometer of the successive phases of capitalist development during this period.

Left Wing Viewpoint

The left wing, on the other hand, draws the opposite conclusion that the mistake of the Labour Government was to fail to use the opportunity of its absolute parliamentary majority to make a direct assault on the class ownership of wealth and establish social ownership over the main sections of economy, and that the consequent acceptance of the framework of capitalism and imperialism led to the inevitably resulting policies of austerity, the wage freeze, heavy rearmament, and reversal of social advance, giving rise to wide disillusionment and a Tory comeback. Hence the conclusion is drawn that the next Labour Government should enter on a vigorous programme of extended nationalisation, of a different type from the previous limited nationalisation measures which left the previous owners still drawing their surplus, and extending social ownership over the main field of economy. The left wing accuses the right wing of the retreat from socialism. The right wing accuses the left wing of clinging to obsolete shibboleths.

Unity for a Common Immediate Programme

It is obvious that this controversy—which represents the modern version of the old battle of liberal capitalism and of socialism for the soul of the labour movement—will not be settled in a day. Its resolution will only develop from the combined outcome of theoretical controversy and of the practical experience of capitalism and the actual struggle of the working class movement. But does this mean that the political labour movement must remain helplessly divided and paralysed, for the benefit of Toryism, while the inner controversy of the right and the left is fought out to a conclusion in the arena of theoretical discussion? It will be agreed by all that such an approach would be fantastic. The battle between tendencies in the labour movement is fought out, not in a vacuum, but within the living conditions of the economic and political struggle of the entire labour movement, in the course of which the capacity of the different tendencies to provide answers to the concrete problems before the movement is tested in practical experience. Is it impossible, alongside the differences in ideological approach or long-term conceptions, to determine the common immediate ground on which all

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sections can unite in the fight against the employers and the Tory Government? On the contrary. The significance of the Brighton Trades Union Congress is precisely that it has shown that this is possible. Arising from this, the effort needs equally to be made to determine the common immediate measures for key changes in home and foreign policy which a Labour Government could carry out, and which could be made the basis for a fighting programme and a united campaign of all sections for the defeat of Toryism and for the return of a Labour Government to carry out such a programme.

Discussion and Action

As will be seen from the announcement on another page in this issue, *Labour Monthly* is opening a Labour Discussion Forum to assist in providing facilities for the discussion of these issues of policy now arising before the labour movement from active representatives of all sections. The way forward towards the solution of present problems can only arise, not simply from the laying down of a ready-made programme by one group or section for the acceptance of the remainder, but from the contribution of all engaged in the struggle towards clarifying differences and forging a common immediate programme. As in previous similar critical phases of development of the trade union and political labour movement during the thirty-five years of existence of this magazine of labour unity, we believe that our journal can play its modest part in assisting such a discussion. For this reason we are inviting, alongside the articles which we are printing on current problems from representatives of varying viewpoints towards the aim of closer understanding, discussion letters on the burning current issues of policy of the broad labour movement. The measure of response will help to show the extent and character of discussion that is proceeding. Such discussion, we believe, is not the alternative to common action, but its necessary counterpart and accompaniment to help towards the unity of all sections for the common campaign for the defeat of Toryism and for the victory of the aims of the labour movement.

R.P.D.

September 17, 1956.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM

LABOUR MONTHLY proposes to open a Labour Discussion Forum in which Members of the Labour Party, Trade Unions, Communist Party and Co-operative organisations are invited to join.

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We take this step in response to a new situation in the labour movement, when everywhere the question is being asked: "What should be Labour's next immediate step? What should be the movement's aim today?"

•

Throughout its 35 years of existence Labour Monthly has from time to time provided a forum for discussion, whether by conferences, discussion groups, or through its columns, during such periods of ferment and critical turning points in the Labour movement. **We believe that such a situation has again arisen.**

•

Discussion of many topics has been going on ever since the Tories got back in 1951, and still more since they got an increased majority at the General Election of May, 1955.

But all that has been happening in the last few months, both in home and foreign affairs, has made the concern felt by every thinking Labour man and woman much keener, and the discussion more widespread and wide-ranging. Solutions must be found—and SOON.

It is a period of ferment and critical turning point for the Labour Movement.

IN THE FOREFRONT of these discussions is the question

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of the future of Labour Policy, a question that has been posed in various ways:

What is to be the policy of the Labour and trade union movement to meet the Government and employers' economic offensive ?

How to defeat the Tories and win a Labour Government ?

What should be the programme of a new Labour Government ?

How do we see the relation of such a programme to the aim of Socialism ?

What should be the central points today of a Socialist foreign and colonial policy ?

What is the view of the new Policy Statements put out by the Labour Party Executive Committee ?

How can unity of the Labour movement be strengthened ?

These are only examples of current questions. Many new problems of economic and social developments are arising which require discussion.

Letters on specific issues of policy are invited to be considered for publication. It will be understood that we shall only be able to publish a proportion of the letters each month, but we shall endeavour to make the selection as widely representative as possible. Conciseness will increase the chance of publication. In view of the limitation of space, we suggest that correspondents should concentrate on one or two definite issues which, from their experience, or discussion in progress in the factory or organisation, or arising from a policy statement or speech, in their view require ventilation.

Correspondents are asked to give (not for publication) their trade union, political or co-operative organisation.

We offer a prize of ONE GUINEA each month for the letter which is most constructive in raising an important issue.

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THOUGHTS ON SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST RELATIONS

R. H. S. CROSSMAN, M.P.

EVER since I returned from a brief visit to Warsaw last April, I have been reflecting on the problems of co-existence—co-existence not merely between the communist and non-communist states but between communist and socialist parties and, most of all, between individual communists and socialists. Occasionally, in the life of any of us, a single personal experience dramatises what was previously merely an intellectual problem; modifies its premises and so raises the argument to a different level. One realises suddenly that the answers one has got used to giving almost automatically are now insufficient; even more serious, the questions are wrongly formulated.

I had this kind of personal experience last April. One morning I had breakfast in Warsaw with a group of Polish socialists and communists with whom, in the previous five days, I felt I had reached a real accord—not on the answers, of course, but on the questions each of us should ask himself. That same evening I was back at Westminster, attending the notorious dinner for Khrushchov and Bulganin. It was only too obvious that we and the Russian leaders were not merely representatives of two completely different worlds. Much more serious, we were unable to establish any means of communication with them. Although the framework of *our* thought and action, and the framework of *their* thought and action, overlapped; although we were dealing with the same problems and using some of the same concepts, there seemed to be no basis for fruitful discussion. If that dinner had been kept at the barren level of diplomatic interchanges and ritual toasts of goodwill, it would have been described as successful, and some people would have drawn the false conclusion that the obstacles to communist-socialist collaboration were melting away. The dinner failed because it was felt that mere diplomatic interchanges were insufficient and an effort was made to launch an informal discussion of the common problems of Russian communists and British socialists. Unfortunately the attempt was made long before any common approach to those problems had been achieved, and the result is well known. The attempt at a single bound to jump from attitudes of deep-seated

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hostility into an informal and friendly discussion let loose suppressed antagonisms on both sides and drove us even further apart.

The conclusion I draw from this incident is a very practical one. It is no use trying to run before you can walk. There are those who believe that, because the invention of thermo-nuclear weapons has ruled out the possibility of general war, East and West can now at once co-operate with mutual confidence. They are indulging themselves in Utopian wish-fulfilment. The habits of antagonism and suspicion, which grew up after the social-democratic movement was split by the foundation of the Third International, were enormously intensified first by the Stalin policy of 'socialism' in one country' and then by the cold war. The mental climate of the communist world has been, to borrow its own language, that of a 'camp', in which every soldier knows that he cannot let his morale be weakened by too much understanding of the enemy. And, particularly since 1945, the democratic Labour movements of the West have accepted a similar attitude. We too have felt ourselves living in a 'camp', and begun to accept as an obvious platitude the assertion that there is an inherent incompatibility between democratic socialism and totalitarian communism. It is no accident that Mr. Khrushchov, since that dinner, has frequently made the assertion that he finds British Conservatives far easier to get on with! He does, and the reason for it is obvious. When he talks to Conservatives, both sides maintain the conventions of intercourse between politicians representing rival Powers. When he talks to Western socialists, he cannot help feeling that they are heretical members of what should be a united Labour movement—and we cannot help feeling just the same about him. So we fall into the kind of acrimony which would occur if the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland and the Pope decided to hold a dinner at which they should informally discuss their common problems in a common spirit of Christian charity! If the Christian Churches find it difficult to heal their schisms, there is no reason to believe that the organisational unity of the Labour movements would be any easier to achieve, even if there were any genuine will at the top to achieve them.

Does this mean that we should be content to accept the present relationship of mutual antagonism and mutual incomprehension? I do not think so. During my brief visit to Warsaw I was impressed by two things. In the first place, it made me realise that sheer lack of contact between Britain and Eastern Europe had created an appalling ignorance on both sides—not so much of the facts (they

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were still obtainable despite the cold war) as of the way people in the other camp were thinking and feeling. And of course the virtual limitation of British visitors during this period to hand-picked, friendly delegations had only increased this ignorance, since these delegations, on their return, only convinced the converted. But, in the second place, I discovered that—in Poland at least—this lack of contact with the West has never been acceptable. On the contrary, it has been felt as a terrible loss, and I observed that this sense of loss was just as strong in communist as in socialist circles. In Warsaw there is a genuine eagerness to read the Western books which were unobtainable in the Stalin era ('We have a rule here that British visitors have to leave all their books behind them,' I was told by one communist) and, in particular, to understand what is going on in the Western Labour movements.

It is my conviction that, if we are to make co-existence more than a diplomatic convention, reflecting a temporary balance of power politics, we should concentrate in the first instance on an interchange of ideas between individual socialists and communists. If this is the purpose behind G. D. H. Cole's new organisation of non-sectarian socialists, I am overwhelmingly in favour it. For, though democratic socialists and communists are divided on ideological issues, they both accept one ideological fallacy. They have both come to assume that 'party politics' (by which I mean the working of the individual in and for a particular party) is the be-all and end-all of socialism and that, outside the parties and their front organisations, there is nothing for the conscientious party member to do. True enough, if you think exclusively in terms of political power, there is very little to be achieved outside the political party, and from this point of view there is less difference between the structure and bureaucratic habits of a democratic Socialist Party and of a Communist Party than is often assumed. Both have a natural tendency towards an oligarchic demand by the leadership for uncritical loyalty by the individual member. And this oligarchic tendency is naturally enormously increased either inside a one-party state or in a party which, though active in another country, pledges its loyalty to a one-party state. Be that as it may, one of the causes for the disillusionment with left-wing politics which we have witnessed in Britain since the war has been the complete identification of socialist activity with party activity. If you believe that the whole of socialism can be achieved in and through a party machine, you will either develop into the kind of career politician we all know or face frustration and disillusionment.

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What is surprising is that socialists and, even more, communists should have swallowed this fallacy. For any objective analysis of social development should have taught us that the political party has a limited function. In the communist sector of the world that function is far larger than in a Western democracy. But even here it cannot be all-embracing. New movements of thought are likely to be stultified by any party bureaucracy if it gets the chance of doing so. For such movements to develop, there must be opportunities for individuals and groups to exchange ideas and be active outside the party machine. In a Western democracy, such extra-party socialist activity is naturally a great deal easier, and the lack of it is chiefly due to a perversion of conscience, which tells the party member that he is wasting his time, or even acting disloyally, if he indulges in socialist activities which are not directly concerned with party politics.

Yet surely the history of British democracy teaches us one lesson. The new seminal ideas have not been developed at general management committees or trade union branches or meetings of Labour Council groups or parliamentary parties or even at Annual Congress and Conference. On the contrary, official organisations only adopt new ideas after they have been fostered by nonconformist groups, individuals and periodicals and have slowly proved their popularity. Indeed, it is these individuals and groups (for the most part consisting of people who are not career politicians) that create (largely through independent journals of opinion) the mental climate of change and provide the ideas which the career politicians then borrow and transform into programmes.

The conclusion I reach, therefore, comes to this. In Europe, at least, there is no prospect at present of any *rapprochement* between the democratic socialist and the communist camps, as such. We are divided not merely by doctrinal differences but by deep-seated habits of thought and action, in whose continued existence the party organisations themselves have a vested interest. The schism will not be reduced either by appeals for working-class unity, whose motives are bound to be suspect, or by unprepared, informal get-togethers of top-level political leaders. What is needed now is a period when individuals in both camps take the risk of really getting to know each other and trying to create a mental climate in which our disagreements can be based not on the dogmas and prejudices of the past but on the real issues which divide us. If we could achieve that, it would be an immense step forward.

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G.D.H. COLE AND UNITY

JAMES KLUGMANN

PROFESSOR COLE has made an extremely important contribution towards better understanding and closer co-operation between socialists and communists. In his *World Socialism Restated** he has written something that can serve as a real basis for joint discussion.

Perhaps the most important thought in the article which he wrote in the *New Statesman and Nation* on May 5 of this year was that socialists and communists should start by outlining their points of agreement, and then, within that framework, discuss their differences. This seems to me to be eminently just and extremely timely. And this recent work of his can help us to do precisely that.

There is so much in his *World Socialism Restated* that can serve as a programme of agreement between communists and militant socialists. He states that as a socialist he stands for 'an end of the entire system of capitalism, which involves exploitation and class-division and is inconsistent with equal relations between man and man'. He makes clear the distinction between reforms, however estimable, that take place within the framework of capitalism, and a real socialist system. Nationalisation is, in itself, not a socialist measure, 'there is nothing eventually socialist in putting an industry under the management of a state-appointed board with instructions to pay its way, including interest charges on the capital it employs'.

With all the criticisms that he has of many aspects of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, he in broad terms takes up his stand in defence and support of them: 'To say that Russia or China ought not to have "gone communist" is, in effect, to say that the Russian and Chinese revolutions ought not to have occurred at all; and far from being willing to say this, I regard these two revolutions as the greatest achievements of the modern world'.

He takes his stand emphatically with the national liberation movements fighting against imperialism and for national liberation: 'it has become the plain duty of Socialists in all countries to take their stand energetically on the side of popular nationalism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and to give full support to the claims of the exploited people to self-determination and to the control of their own development, in sharp opposition to all attempts to maintain

*New Statesman and Nation. 1s. 6d.

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imperialist rule or to insist on the preferential claims of white settlers or capitalist investors'. 'I am for the Communists in Indo-China, for the left-wing nationalists in North Africa and the Middle East, for the "blacks" in South Africa, and even, despite its barbaric abuses, for Mau-Mau against the white settlers in Kenya'.

Most important of all, he makes a strong plea for ending the cold war and for the promotion throughout the world of communist-socialist unity: 'I believe in the need for working-class unity as a necessary condition of the advance to socialism'; 'I want then to see the socialists of the world working together, both in common action against capitalism and imperialism and the remnants of feudal and military domination and in free and intimate intercourse for the development of Socialist ideas and policies'; it is necessary to break free 'from the bonds of Nato, Seato and the alliance with America in the Middle East, and by insisting on testing out to the full the genuineness of the Communist desire for peace and mutual disarmament'.

Professor Cole puts forward with great lucidity so many ideas and propositions that can serve as a basis for agreement and common action between communists and socialists. Naturally in the course of his argument he does not refrain from a number of strong criticisms of communism and communist parties. Though I profoundly disagree with many of these, I welcome them, because I feel that for a real mutual understanding and co-operation we need to record and argue our differences as well as our accord.

There are a whole number of issues on which joint discussion is necessary. I think that Professor Cole, for instance, is perfectly correct to state that the road to socialism will take different forms in different countries; that under certain historic circumstances the violence of reaction forces socialists to use violence in reply, that under other more favourable circumstances a peaceful road to socialism becomes possible. I do not think that any communist could disagree with his sentiments 'I am not denying that force and violence may need to be used: but I am saying that they should be used as little as possible'. But I think he is wrong at times in the way he presents the communist attitude.

'No-one in his sense,' writes Cole, 'would wish to establish socialism by revolution if it can be got by peaceful means'. It seems to me that there is a deep confusion here. A revolution means a change of political power. A socialist revolution means that political power must be taken out of the hands of the capitalist class

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and into the hands of the people led by the industrial working class. Without such a revolution I do not think that the advance to socialism is possible in any country. But revolutions do not mean so many pints of blood. A revolution can be violent or it can be peaceful dependent on the relation of class forces involved. And it is utterly false to regard the Marxist revolutionary attitude as one desirous of violence and bloodshed. Lenin searched as long as it seemed possible for a peaceful road to socialism in Russia, and only renounced when for the reasons that Professor Cole puts so well, the violence of the counter-revolution at home and abroad made it impossible. If Professor Cole would read the programme of the Communist Party, 'The British Road to Socialism', he would see how the effort is made to present the possibility for a peaceful road to socialism here in Britain.

It is not true that communists condone violence for its own sake. Communists, just as Professor Cole, condemn all unnecessary violence and that is why we reject not as communist but as *alien to Communism* all the unnecessary violence that occurred in Russia in the period 1933-1953.

Conspicuously absent from the booklet is a discussion of the nature of the British state and how to change it, and yet, in my view this is at the heart of the whole matter.

There are two issues on which I would like far more discussion with Professor Cole. One of these is the effect that Britain's imperialist position has had on the British Labour movement. I believe that the exploitation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples exercised a profoundly negative effect on British labour organisation and struggle and I believe that Professor Cole belittles the importance of this. Secondly, I agree with him that much more concrete study is necessary of the developments of modern capitalism. I do not agree with his analysis, but I believe that we communists are greatly at fault here in that we have been far too prone to make generalisations without sufficiently attempting a deep concrete study of all that is involved in the structure and working of modern monopoly capitalism.

Finally, I believe that Professor Cole is not consistent on one all-important point. He stands very boldly and strongly for working class unity in general, for unity in France, Italy and on a world scale, but I do not think he quite fairly faces up to both the need for and possibilities of such unity in Britain. The British Communist Party, he says, is 'negligible'. British communist trade unionists he recog-

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nises as 'a considerable force in a number of trade unions' but treats them as 'a disruptive and trouble-making force'.

I am sure that Professor Cole welcomes the recent militant and courageous decisions of the last T.U.C. on wages, automation, the 40-hour week, and against the use of force in Suez. But I believe he utterly underestimates the role that communist trade unionists and the Communist Party have played in making such progressive decisions possible. Was it 'disruptive' to fight against the wage-freeze policy? Was it 'trouble-making' to fight for work and shorter working hours? Was it 'disruptive' or 'trouble-making' to take the lead in demanding a peaceful solution to the Suez issue? I cannot see how one can consistently be for unity everywhere else but in one's own home.

These are some of my disagreements with Professor Cole's booklet, which, I must repeat, I feel to be extremely progressive and extremely important. It is correct for us to see where we differ, but it is correct to do this only if we discuss our differences within the framework of our much wider and much deeper agreement. Above all where we are agreed, let us act together, and where we are disagreed let us discuss.

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On the Seventh Anniversary

Sowing

Tending the Herd

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ıe Chinese People's Republic

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The Victor

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WHY THIS SUEZ MADNESS?

IVOR MONTAGU

'THE Prime Minister's policy can lead only to disaster. It will bring this country, as Mr. Gaitskell rightly said, either to carrying out the threat of using armed force or to the greatest diplomatic climb-down in our history.' So the *Manchester Guardian* on the first day of debate at Parliament's return.

'Eden Gets Rough, Tells Nasser: Ike's With Us—And We're Taking Over *Our* Canal! . . *If Egypt blocks the Canal or stops the user-association convoys then immediate action will be taken before the Security Council.* There, Nasser will be accused of a direct breach of the 1888 Convention which guarantees free use of the Canal—and the way will be clear for the use of force . . . . let the cry babies howl! It's GREAT Britain again!' Thus, in capitals, italics and black, screamed the *Daily Sketch* upon the same event.

In these two howls, one of woe, one of joy, are expressed the situation of the day. The former describes its perils as now seen by one half of the former advocates of a contented bi-partisan policy of Empire. The latter contains the clue to the extraordinary antics of Anthony, which have astonished as much as they have alarmed the world ever since Colonel Nasser announced nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, and which have brought us all nearer the brink of the grave.

The peculiar element in their posture has not been the Prime Minister's objections to the Egyptian action, nor even the ends he has ostensibly sought, but the manner of it, the way in which he has remorselessly and by plain proclamation of purpose, sought —as the *Sketch* puts it—to 'clear the way' to war.

Juridically, in this dispute with Nasser, the Prime Minister has not had a leg to stand on at any time. He dare not take his case to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, to the Security Council, or to the General Assembly.

At the first it would be laughed out of court. Not only is the Canal *not* British (it was built against British advice and without British skills or British labour, and such British share-interest as was purchased later, got cheap from the difficulties or corruption of the original investors), but it is likewise *not* international; and the British Government has been most insistent throughout the history of the Canal (even so recently as only a few months ago in the last

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Anglo-Egyptian agreement) in insisting that the company which owned and ran it *is* Egyptian. (It used to suit the British imperialist book, in accordance with the age-old buck-passing technique, to insist on this Egyptian-ness whenever *anyone else* proposed internationalisation, because, so long as the British Government controlled or predominantly influenced Egypt, this was a means of denying anyone else a share in control of the canal and not itself being juridically responsible for the denial.)

No treaty has been breached. The famous 1888 Treaty, guaranteeing passage through the canal no more makes the canal international than the Montreux Convention deprives Turkey of the Dardanelles. Indeed, it specifically treats the canal as Egyptian. Egypt is not breaching the treaty by nationalisation, either in letter or spirit; if anyone is breaching it, both in spirit and in practice, it is those who are responsible for bribing and threatening the pilots to coax them to withdraw—bribing them by promises of pensions and threatening them by means of forfeiture of rights.*

Is the canal *essential* to Britain? In the literal sense, of course not. The extreme view was put by Augustine Courtauld in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* on September 10:

> What is all this fuss? Cannot our ships go round the Cape? They had to do it during the war when the canal got blocked with magnetic mines. This may sound like weakness, but is it? After all, this ditch does belong to Egypt, but the sea is free.

No one doubts that, if the canal were suddenly to be blocked by an earthquake, or disappear through some other convulsion of nature, Britain would survive.

Is passage through the canal a British interest? Certainly. As of many other maritime nations. Particularly, no doubt, to Britain. Is that grounds for war? Which Britain has renounced, as an instrument of policy. (Formally, in the Kellogg Pact, as well as in scores of other declarations and instruments.) Can Nasser be relied upon, always and in all circumstances, to respect this interest? Doubtless not. Is that any excuse for *preventive* war, before he even acts against it?

Is Nasser nasty? That is hardly the question. 'Our quarrel is not with Egypt, still less with the Arab people. It is with Nasser,' says Eden. (Exactly, as with Oom Paul Kruger, not the Boers.) Nasser is a dictator, declares Eden. Exactly, like Chiang Kai-shek, Rhee, Ngo Ninh Diem, Pibul Songgram, Nuri Said, Salazar, and

*The hand-washing act of Eden-Mollet in pretending they are not responsible for what the Canal Company does carries small conviction to those who remember the shares they control *and* the rôle of their own functionaries on the company's board.

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a whole pack of others whom not only do we not go to war with on that account, but some of whom at least Eden cherishes as precious allies. It is scarcely dictatorship that sticks in Sir Anthony's gullet, but the fear that the dictator may not be friendly even if paid to be. Can anyone doubt that, if Nasser had joined the Baghdad Pact, he would have stayed the white-headed boy?

But one can hardly go round fighting everyone one cannot rely upon, whether because one has not succeeded in buying him or does not trust him to deliver the goods. Or can one? Surely it is preferable, at least these days, to try to keep him straight with guarantees and treaties. So one might suppose. For Nasser has repudiated no treaties or guarantees. (He has cancelled a concession to an Egyptian company which had twelve more years to run, an act somewhere intermediate in faithlessness between Iran or Mexico nationalising an oil well and Attlee nationalising a coal-mine.) Indeed, he has re-affirmed the 1888 Treaty with its guarantees. He has offered to negotiate a revision and a strengthening of it, which, since the world has changed somewhat in the last seventy years is *prima facie* not undesirable. It has been clear from the first, via Krishna Menon and others who visited him en route to London that he is entirely willing to negotiate. The final difference between Nasser's proposals made to Menzies, and the Menzies' proposals described as Eden's irreducible minimum, as analysed by Robens, are narrow. Instead of Menzies' international board, Nasser proposes an international advisory committee, tied to the United Nations. Why not? The committee could not enforce guarantees without gathering and applying sanctions. But no more could the board. Short of permanent occupation of the canal—and that Britain had, and has already found impossible to prolong—the board's effective control would always have to depend on Egyptian tolerance, with background possibility of force as guarantee, anyway. Would not a tightened and revised new Treaty, tied to the United Nations, with the interest of Asian countries and U.S.S.R. marching jointly with that of the ' West ' so far as preserving passage is concerned, be a much better instrument than that of 1888? Why not negotiate the ' narrow ' ?*

Why? Because the whole point of Eden's position, the aspect

*It is sometimes urged that Egypt disregards the 1888 Treaty in its frustrations of passage of Israeli vessels or cargoes. The Egyptian argument is that the technical state of war with Israel justifies the ban and that Britain banned passage of enemy trade in exactly the same way throughout the two world wars. Eden has been perfectly content to accept this fact of ban on Israel hitherto, and only recalls it now he has his own grounds of quarrel. Further, he cheerfully accepts, without the least protestation, ban on transit not only of Israelis but of Jewish *British* citizens on B.O.A.C. planes across Iraq, his bosom ally and puppet. Obviously, re-negotiation and revision of the freedom of canal transit provided in the 1888 Treaty would afford opportunity to clarify and protect this disputed aspect of canal passage.

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that he has shouted perpetually from the housetops and that has astonished and alienated the world—even those sections of it that have good reason not to admire Colonel Nasser and to welcome tightening of treaty guarantees of passage through the canal—is that he will *not* negotiate. He has gone out of his way, again and again, to manoeuvre so that any concession from Nasser, any agreement reached, would appear as having been extorted by force or threat of force.

This has been extravagantly contrived at every step. Eden's immediate answer to nationalisation was not negotiation but partial mobilisation. The conference was ostentatiously arranged *not* as a conference of *all* interested, or as *agreed* between the parties, but as one patently packed with a majority of friends and clients, and sited, not in a neutral spot, but in London, to which Nasser was summoned as a naughty boy. No attempt was made to reach an agreed plan, or place alternatives before Nasser; indeed, the plan placed before him was precisely formulated in such a way as to include terms known in advance to be unacceptable to him. The mouth piece (Menzies) sent with it was precisely and publicly instructed not to negotiate, and to make it more inacceptable still, the further massing of troops was publicised simultaneously. The latest plan, of a users' union, not in itself intrinsically exceptionable and, in other conditions, a possible convenience for negotiation, is deliberately depicted as a device to lead to 'other means' in case otherwise Nasser might think of taking it at its face value and negotiating with it.

Every step has made it plain that what Eden has required is less the fruits of victory than the act of surrender, and moreover a surrender that must be publicly attained by the parade of force on the part of the old empires. We are in the presence of a Tory crisis, a dying convulsion of Conservatism.

From *The Times* to the *Sketch* the Empire crusaders are quite right when they see involved their mess of pottage. The gyrations of Eden are not just the hysteria of a petulant and obstinate weakling. Any illusions in that respect should have been dissipated by the hungry hyena roar from the Tory benches as he spluttered of 'other means'. Nor is it just a matter of the internal politics of the Tory party, Eden's fear at being jettisoned by the Suez cave. It is much deeper than that, it is the jeopardy of a class and its privileges. The lesser breeds must be put in their place. These sudden converts to 'internationalism of one waterway only' have

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not become One Worlders overnight. The sauce they offer the goose, definitely does *not* apply to ganders. Turkey may rule the Dardanelles, Adenauer Kiel, U.S.A. (cuckoo-tenant) Panama, Britain Gibraltar—but an upstart Colonel who trades with U.S.S.R. and is coloured to boot, a mere wog! The whole world must be shown that he's not fit to join our club or wear our tie. Such as he may neither own waterways, nor are guarantees from them acceptable. *He* must accept, what no one asks others to accept, and moreover, he must be evidently made to accept it by force. Of what use is force if we cannot make people bow to it? People are asking what troops and conscription are for in a nuclear age. These Labour fellows even had the impertinence to ask Parliament to shorten the period of military service. After Jordan, Suez. People will refuse to put up with military expenditure soon if we don't show we *can* do something with it. They'll ask what we are so keen on Cyprus for if we don't use it. What are sabres for if not to rattle? Are (whisper it) our Generals worth their pay?

As the quotation at the head of this article has shown, there are others, by no means revolutionary, who have less confidence in Eden's path. They are not so sure as the Templer who so often predicted victory in Malaya, the Harding who thought the Cypriot terrorists were at their last gasp. They have noted what happened to Glubb Pasha, to MacArthur on the Yalu and at Dien Bien Phu. Things do not always go so luckily as in Guatemala. And if things turned out not to be a pushover? As was said of Churchill's great ancestor: *'Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre, ne sait s'il reviendra'*.

'The war would unite the Arab nations against us, weaken the Atlantic alliance, and break the Commonwealth. It would open the Middle East to Communism. It would cost numbers of needless casualties; it would leave us without oil. It would be the end of Britain and France as important nations', gloomily concludes the *Manchester Guardian.*

The trouble for Empire is that they are both right. As the *Manchester Guardian* warns, force would ruin the Empire. And as the Generals fear, if they eschew force the Empire must give way. The world is moving forward. One World of co-operation *is* coming, and not by the path of subjection of peoples to expanding empires and exclusive clubs, but by the contrary path of liberation, the co-existence and partnership of equally sovereign states. But this is philosophy and prophecy. The actual danger is immediate. Eden and the Generals have the votes in Parliament and they mean to

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override the Gaitskells and the *Guardians* if our protest remains confined to words.

Here begins to become plain the enormous power of the peace idea. They cannot go to war, pouf, just like that. Already we are strong enough to prevent this. There must be a reason, nowadays. Some people, the *Sketch* for instance, require only an excuse ('*Nasser* will be accused . . . and the way will be clear'), but others need more. According to the Charter, force may be used only to repel aggression. But what is aggression? Time-serving lawyers have been found to prate that Nasser was the first aggressor because he seized the canal companies' offices. This merely defiles paper and fails to convince even pussy. Striving to preserve peace, the Soviet Union proposed ages ago at the United Nations that aggression should be so defined as automatically to entail condemnation and international action against any state which declares war on another, invades it by armed force without a declaration of war, bombs its territory, attacks its ships or aircraft, enters its boundaries without permission or remains after permission has expired, blockades its coasts or ports, supports armed bands that invade another state. It proposed that no attack by one country on another could be justified by any political, economic or strategic ground, the exploitation of others' resources, the protection of investments on its territory; by its being backward, having a poorly-run administration, revolutionary, counter-revolutionary or civil war disorders; by its repudiation of treaties, trade agreements, economic concessions or debts; by its refusal to let armed forces cross its territory, internal religious measures or causation of frontier incidents. H.M. Government opposed this on the ground that the definition was 'insufficiently elastic'. We can now see what it meant. Or, at least, hoped to be in a position to get away with.

Nevertheless, Eden's problem remains. On Korea the people in many countries were confused because the United Nations was believed to have given a licence to repel aggression (even though, at the trial that procured the verdict, the accused was not allowed to be represented and the Court was irregularly composed). But here they will hardly stomach Britain and France arrogating the right to act as judges in their own behalf without even the semblance of a trial, and there is not the remotest possibility that, on the facts to date, Eden could receive a licence to exert force from even a majority either of the Security Council or the General Assembly. So long as Britain and France are isolated in readiness to resort to force, to that extent they are handicapped, so that Eden's whole

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endeavour has been to disarm opposition both at home and abroad by pretending he has the support of other governments. That is why, instead of ordering 'Fire!' at once, he had to go through the elaborate comedy of pretending his ideas endorsed by a London conference, a 'Dulles plan,' an '18-nation mission' and the like, all totalling up to 100 per cent. failure to delude anyone into supposing for a moment that any of the 18 who endorsed the plan, endorsed the idea of enforcing it. Finally, to strip him naked, within 24 hours of his Commons 'triumph', the master-stroke of a users' union about to force the passage ('Ike's with us'), Dulles explained that, if Nasser shouldn't play Ike would indeed be with us—to the extent of selling us petrol and going round the Cape himself.

These very pretences, in the futility of their effort to justify the unjustifiable, are a tribute to the strength of the world sentiment for peace. But this sentiment must not be lulled into futility. It is strong only to the extent that those inspired by it are ready to translate it into action. Already the *Daily Herald* is seeking to represent as a success Eden's concession that, except in 'emergency', he would not use force *before consulting U.N.*, when what was being demanded by Gaitskell was a pledge not to use force *without authority of U.N.*, and the minimum necessary, in fact, is a pledge not to use force at all, but to negotiate sensibly.

The polls show that already the great majority are against force. But there are times when it is not enough just to contract out and remember to disapprove one hour a week. There are times when a whole people becomes responsible for tolerating the evil of its ministers, and history will make it suffer for its sufferance. Already Eden has, with the cost of his big stick, ruined more of the country's economic security than all Macmillan's blows at the standard of living could ever even purport to save. But much worse is the cost of his big mouth. Where is the rule of law? The obligations of the Charter? If every big nation may decide for itself what on the territory of a smaller one is or is not necessary to its own well-being, and decide for itself when or not force may be used, what has become of the whole international system for peace and security so painfully erected after and at the cost of the Second World War? Robens rightly said the dispute is about whether we should live in the world of law and order or the world of the jungle. What use hanging Hitler, if we do not restore these protective standards by utterly discrediting and disposing of Eden and his war party now, for good and all? We have a job on hand, not only to stop the war and threats of war but to ensure a sensible negotiated settlement.

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THE CO-OPERATIVES AT THE CROSSROADS

JOSEPH REEVES, M.P.

FOR over a century, the workers of Great Britain have struggled to free themselves from the tyranny of a system of economic slavery as oppressive in the early days as any exercised by a despotic ruling class anywhere else in the world. By dint of struggle and persistent effort, the workers gradually built up the means of their own emancipation, in the co-operative and trade union movements. At the beginning of the century, they took a step further and established the Labour Party, which became essentially the political expression of these two great movements.

The co-operative movement was designed to give the workers some measure of economic power even under a system of capitalist exploitation and the success it has achieved is a tribute to those wise working-class pioneers who saw that the workers could emancipate themselves by controlling the economic forces which fashioned the type of life they were to lead. Whilst it is true that their original plan to form self-governing Home Communities within a competing capitalist order was unrealistic, their subsequent policies achieved real success in a variety of ways. They contributed to a consolidated working-class movement for economic emancipation and to the advancement of peace, sometimes in face of the most disheartening conditions. During the many crises of the 20th century, the international organisation of the movement, the International Co-operative Alliance, continued to function and today includes all elements in the great world movement of consumers' and producers' co-operation. As I write these lines, I read of a meeting of the Insurance Committee of the International Co-operative Alliance in Moscow.

From simple beginnings over a century ago, the movement has grown to enormous proportions and as the under-developed countries reach out for economic support, they turn to the co-operative method as being the most effective way of emancipation.

Besides its trading activities which run into hundreds of million pounds a year in this country alone, much educational and political work is undertaken for the purpose of supplementing the economic

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activities of the movement. In Britain, a powerful political force has been created in the Co-operative Party, which has a compact group of members in the House of Commons functioning as a component part of the Labour Party. The turnover of the movement is moving rapidly towards £1,000 million a year, the sales of the Co-operative Wholesale Society to Societies alone amounting to £418 million. Over 25 per cent of the population are registered members of co-operative societies which, if members' children are included, represents roughly half of the population. The turnover of the Banking organisation under the auspices of the C.W.S. has reached the astronomical figure of £3,994 millions annually. This is the movement built by working people to serve working people, which is contributing to the transformation of the social and economic conditions of our country—indeed, it is no exaggeration to state—of the whole world.

But today, this great movement faces the most searching challenge of its century-old struggle to defend the interests of the consumer. By eliminating the profit motive in retail distribution, it has provided the consumer associated with its enlightened work with substantial protection from the rapaciousness of the profit-making private trader. During the post-war years, however, a force competing with the co-operative movement has appeared in the shape of nationally-organised retail combines of various types. These combines achieve success with the consuming public by adopting an enlightened policy on price, quality and service. Their service is modern and attractive and the colour they import into salesmanship makes a good impression on the consumer. It is true they do not divide the substantial surpluses they make among their customers as is the policy of the co-operative movement, but they do strive to retain the support of the customer by a variety of attractive devices. Large-scale manufacture and buying, a considerable expenditure on consumer research and the use of mechanisation in the handling of goods, all contribute to the competitiveness of prices even to the length, in certain exceptional cases, of wiping out the advantages of the co-operative dividend.

The co-operative movement as now organised into so many small-scale societies can only achieve such advantages for the consumer by a radical re-organisation of the individual society, so that it becomes firstly an integral part of the buying and manufacturing agency established in the first instance for its benefit; and secondly a viable unit, comprehensive in its trading operations

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and large enough to finance in association with its federations, its own development. What the unit should be is a matter for careful determination, but it is clear beyond the shadow of doubt that the great majority of societies are no longer large enough, financially strong enough or technically equipped enough to stand up to the keen competition now confronting them.

A Co-operative Society is required to do a double task in serving the co-operative member. Firstly, it must pay interest on capital which unlike the capital of its large-scale competitor is on call at any time at a moment's notice. Secondly, it *must* declare a dividend on all purchases, because of a custom which springs from the very roots of the Rochdale movement. During the last century, this was no disability, because profit margins were very much higher than they are today. If all the dividends on purchases were translated into dividends on share capital, the sum would be very large indeed. A study of a co-operative society's balance sheet will show how vast is the profit enjoyed by the private trader because the sum returned to the co-operative member as dividend on purchases would in its case go to the shareholder. In many co-operative societies, including some of the very large ones, dividends on purchases are now no more than one shilling in the pound and in some cases even less. If this tendency to fall grows, as I am sure it will because of extreme competition, societies may have to consider the elimination of the dividend altogether and provide members with benefits in other forms; such as a more comprehensive consumer service in the stores and cultural, educational and social services which will sharply differentiate them from the private trader. Many people ask me how a consumers' co-operative society differs from a private retail trader who may offer a bonus on purchases. Firstly, the consumers' society is owned by the purchasing members, no matter how small their capital share interest in the society may be; secondly, they elect the body which governs the society and determines its policy; thirdly, no matter how much they may invest in the society, and the maximum is £500, they have only one vote. Compare this democratic set-up with a joint stock company and it will soon be appreciated how the principle of human equality in economic affairs operates and how fundamentally co-operative trading differs from private trading.

Many societies are now far too small to provide all the services a modern co-operator needs. Some indeed are little more than grocers whose trading in the 'dry goods'—as they are called—do

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them no credit. The movement as a whole is slowly appraising itself of this serious weakness and its decision to appoint an Independent Commission to make an investigation into the whole series of problems facing the movement was in my view a very wise one.

The co-operative movement is indispensable to the working class movement and it would be a crime of the highest order were it to be allowed to wither and decay because of inefficiency brought about by the indolence of its members. The co-operative movement gives economic power to the workers. It is a mighty instrument of policy and can make a profound contribution to the ultimate emancipation of the still dispossessed class. Because of the power already in the hands of the workers through the co-operative and trade union movements supporting the political policies of the workers, a great advance has been made in living conditions euphemistically called 'the welfare state'; but economic emancipation in all its fullness has still to come and the co-operative movement has a key part to play in this direction.

What, therefore, are the problems facing the movement? They are not simple, but they need to be faced with courage and determination.

The democratic nature of the movement is being sadly impaired by the apathy of the members. A survey undertaken recently revealed that figures of members attending the business meetings of societies and voting at society elections were much worse than previously believed to be the case. It had been roughly calculated that 2 per cent of members attended the business meetings of societies and 5 per cent took part in the election of members to the governing bodies of societies. But the startling truth is that only 0.25 per cent attend meetings and 1.34 per cent vote in committee elections. This is a shocking state of affairs and if our co-operative democracy is to be preserved, some hard thinking and work will be necessary.

Then again, as I have said, there are far too many small and inefficient societies. I do not believe in bigness for bigness' sake, but a movement with the name co-operative, should learn to co-operate. Societies should be strong and competitive, and of a character to stand up to and beat the great combines catering for the consumer.

The co-operative movement of Sweden by skilful management has done it successfully. Why should we lag behind in Britain,

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the motherland of co-operation? A co-operative society should be of a size to enable it to satisfy all the needs of a consumer and small societies should be required to surrender their local interests and autonomy to the needs of a larger consumer public. By so doing, they serve co-operative principles and the class they represent.

Modern retailing has become highly specialised and the way the co-operative movement has developed its wholesaling and productive machinery has made specialisation difficult if not almost impossible. The wholesale societies are called upon to supply societies with the whole of their consumer needs which cover a very large range of goods. Our opponents specialise on a few articles and by so doing develop style and efficiency, difficult of achievement with our multiplicity of tasks. Our co-operative wholesale societies have done some truly prodigious things in the past. Today, they need re-organising upon a more functional basis so as to provide for a more specialised approach to production.

Today, we manage our societies as they did in the early days of the movement. We elect members to serve on management committees. In my view, such a system was only suitable when societies were small and turnover limited. Today, we possess many large-scale societies with turnovers running into many millions of pounds. The elected person can no longer manage such vast concerns. Societies need to appoint Councils of Members representing all the elements in the societies, from every district covered by the operations of the societies, who should be responsible for policy and for the appointment of the trained persons to undertake the day-to-day management. Those appointed should constitute the business executive, subject to the policy directions of the Council of elected members.

How is all this to be done? Today, each society is a law unto itself and need not conform to the will of the movement as a whole. Congress decisions may or may not be implemented by the individual society. I think this is wrong and is not really democratic. The movement cannot operate a national economic policy because of this. I would suggest that no society should have the right to be an affiliated member of the Co-operative Union unless it were prepared to carry out Congress decisions. These and other reforms which cannot be elaborated in one short article would give unity, purposefulness and dynamic to the modern movement which wields so much power in spite of its weaknesses.

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T.U.C. PROGRAMME

FRANK HAXELL

YEAR after year there has been developing a realisation that the official policies of the Trades Union Congress on the major industrial and political issues and problems facing the people do not correspond to the needs of the situation. The T.U.C. has in the economic field—with the exception of the year 1950 when the Electrical Trades Union successfully moved a motion against the policy of wage restraint—been advocating a policy of price control, price reductions, a limitation on profit levels and increased wages for the lower paid workers only. The arguments against an alternative policy were many and varied, ranging from the danger of pricing ourselves out of the world market, to the plight of the old age pensioners and others on fixed incomes, based on the assertion that every increase in wages must inevitably bring with it a further round of increased prices.

Since the inauguration of the policy of restraint in both wages and profits, a material change has taken place. An entirely new economic and political situation exists: no longer is a Labour Government in power, but a Tory Government bent, among other things, on a policy of so-called freedom, in which controls have been abandoned, subsidies completely wiped out, and accompanied by the greatest profit-making spree in our post-war history.

The ever-increasing effects on the workers' budgets of Government policy both at home and abroad, the continuing and recurring economic crises, the obvious signs of growing unemployment, and the periodic international conflicts in which the possibility of war becomes a reality, compel both the right and left wing to review and re-assess past and present policies. It is the worsening economic situation which has underlined that however plausible arguments of price control—price reductions—control of profits—may appear to be as the best methods of solving our economic difficulties, they are not practicable of operation in the present circumstances, and the attempt to put such proposals forward merely serves to hold back the movement and prevents it defending the living standards of the people, while the employers make hay and improve their profit levels. In fact the trade unions have in the past few years been advocating one policy and pursuing another. They were bound to

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do so. The economic pressure on their members dictated the necessity to press for increased wages.

Congress 1956 represents a decisive change in attitude and approach to the economic issues facing our movement. Its decisions reassert the need for a planned economy and effective economic controls. It makes clear that it is in complete opposition to Government economic policy. It rejects wage restraint as an economic instrument to recover control, and it gives notice that in the present situation the affiliated unions will pursue a policy of increasing the wages of their members. Similarly, on automation it faces squarely the fact that no advantage is to be gained by resisting the application of new processes and techniques to industry, but on the other hand insists that there must be consultation, and adequate compensation and maintenance for workers who through these circumstances become redundant or are undergoing re-training. The demand for the 40-hour week, in spite of the General Council's opposition, gives the movement a three-point programme on which to campaign and fight.

This changing attitude was reflected throughout the debates on many subjects, although not always with the same degree of success as on the economic issues. The arguments for the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to meet and discuss matters of common interest, and on the desirability of establishing British-Soviet trade union unity, were largely bedevilled by the pleas of loyalty to our commitments with the ICFTU—on assertions that the WFTU were undermining the work of the ICFTU to build trade unions in the colonial countries—that the Soviet unions were not free trade unions—and relating to past experiences within the WFTU. On these matters conviction of the necessity to revise our attitude was by no means so pronounced, and as a result the progressive forces within Congress were unable to carry the vote, although they without doubt won the argument.

This Congress has shown that given the opportunity we can unite around and determine a common programme, irrespective of any political or ideological differences that exist within the movement. We have witnesed a demonstration of unity the like of which has not been seen for many years. Congress unanimously declares its policy on wages, on automation and no war over Suez. Who will say now that there is not room within our movement for the accommodation of the various conflicting views, that there is no basis for compromise, or agreement on common policy? If one single lesson is to be

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learnt it is that where the material conditions determine the need for unity, for a common programme, and joint action, then that unity, programme and action can be established.

It would be foolish to imagine that complete unity has been achieved or that the present degree of unity is by any means on strong foundations—on the contrary it faces the danger of being undermined and disrupted. Already the jackals of the Tory press are looking for someone to tear to pieces. Denied their prey, the left-wing forces, they are hunting in fresh fields. The General Secretary of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers is accused by the *Daily Telegraph* of using 'claptrap' in arguing for improved living standards for his members in a planned economy. They have analysed every word of the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union in an endeavour to prove, somehow, that he did not mean what he said. In every way attempts will be made to undermine and minimise the outstanding degree of unity achieved.

The 1956 programme decisions were taken in the light of the declared opposition of Government and Employers to increased wages and a shorter working week. Macmillan went out of his way in a pre-Congress statement to plead for wage restraint—the Engineering Employers gave notice that they would reject any further application for increased wages (they had already rejected a claim for the 40-hour week). Nevertheless, it is a realistic programme and conforms for the first time in many years to the needs of the situation. Whatever else may be said by those who wish to water down the open challenge to Government policy, and who make scurrilous attacks on certain trade union leaders as a means of offsetting any real attempt by the unions to fulfil their obligations to their members and the nation, they cannot escape the obvious writing on the wall. The people are awakening to the overwhelming need to challenge the employers, to resist Government policy and for a new approach in our policies both at home and abroad. If the unity so far obtained can be strengthened and extended from the industrial to the political field, the life of the Government will be short indeed and the possibility of the fruits of the new productive levels achieved and achievable being enjoyed by the people as a whole, brought that much nearer.

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WHITHER GERMANY?

GORDON SCHAFFER

THE banning of the Communist Party in Western Germany represents the culmination of a long process for the restoration of the forces which built up and backed Hitler's regime. Simultaneously, Dr. Adenauer's defence ministry issued an order reinstating former S.S. officers, up to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, in their old ranks in the new German army. Against this background Dr. Adenauer has thought fit to send a note to the Four Powers demanding the reunification of Germany on his terms.

So, after eleven years, we reach the end of the journey. The Chancellor of the Bonn Republic, confident apparently in the support of the Western powers, plans the last stage in the overthrow of the Potsdam agreement. At Potsdam, the victorious allies decided to dismantle the cartels, without whose support the Nazis could never have made war. The cartels are back and their links with their counterparts in the United States more firmly established than ever. The victorious allies decreed the restoration of free political parties and looked to the men and women who had waged the long, lonely fight against fascism to lead in the rebuilding of a democratic country. Today in Western Germany, alone among the leading countries of Europe outside Franco Spain and Portugal, the Communist Party is declared illegal. At Potsdam the leaders of Britain, the Soviet Union and America repeated their pledge to destroy the Nazi Party and all its manifestations as the only safeguard for the peoples of Europe against a repetition of the horrors through which they had passed. Step by step the Nazis have come back. The industrialists, like Krupp, who built up fortunes out of Nazi war orders and the slaves collected by the S.S., have been compensated to the tune of scores of millions by permission of the Western allies. And now the new army, air force and navy are to be officered by the men denounced at Nuremburg as criminals against humanity.

Gerhardt Schroeder, West German Minister of the Interior, who was an officer in the Nazi storm troopers as early as 1933, is in charge of the police raids against the Communists. And just as it happened after the Reichstag fire, the assault on the Communists is the prelude to a campaign against all other progressive movements, including above all the organisations demanding

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peace and genuine discussions on German unity with the leaders of the German Democratic Republic.

In these days when words are being stood on their head more than ever before, it is well to recall a few simple facts about the events leading to the present situation in Germany. 'Appeasement' of Hitler's Reich was a policy aimed quite deliberately at encouraging the Germans to attack the Soviet Union instead of demanding colonies and other concessions from the West. It was reinforced by the links between German industry and the arms manufacturers and producers of essentials of war in the other capitalist states. It created a military and industrial power which would have defeated the West if at the eleventh hour an alliance had not been forged with the Soviet Union, the only power that had understood the menace and at the cost of immense sacrifice had prepared to resist it.

When the men who appeased Hitler, or the men like Sir Anthony Eden who saw the danger, but did not have the courage to rally the nation against it, compare Egypt which has no industry capable of making war, with Nazi Germany and call for war against Nasser 'because they have learned the lesson of pre-war appeasement', one can only marvel at the extent to which they and their propaganda machine carry the limits of human credulity.

It is in Western Germany that the lessons learned before the war need to be applied. And it is because the Soviet Union has applied these lessons that Mr. Gromyko, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, has replied to the West German government that 'remilitarisation and the suppression of freedom in Western Germany have made unification impossible'.

Because, in accordance with its traditional policy of building friendly relations with all states whatever their system of government, the Soviet Union established diplomatic relation with Bonn, Dr. Adenauer and the Western powers appear to imagine that the Soviet leaders no longer believe in the warning they gave that the acceptance of West German rearmament would make reunification impossible. The Adenauer note talks of creating a friendly state of seventy millions and says that 'no one would be persecuted after reunification because of his political beliefs or previous actions'. It declares that a united Germany need not necessarily belong to Nato, it would merely have freedom of choice to do so. It suggests a demilitarised zone on the lines of the plan put forward by Sir Anthony Eden at the summit talks but makes no reference

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to the fact that when Mr. Macmillan subsequently discussed the proposal, he wanted the neutral zone to run through Poland and not Germany.

But how far could a West German government carry out even these limited pledges? West Germany is a member of Nato and is committed to treaties allowing the other Nato members to intervene if a German government should adopt policies considered contrary to Nato interests. It was repeatedly made clear, during the discussions before the rearmament treaties were ratified, that a united Germany would be accepted by the West only if it were under the control of the present Federal government.

The Supreme Court decision under which the Communist Party was declared illegal lays it down that any party seeking to change the present constitution is guilty of treason.

Clearly the Adenauer note seeks to achieve the objective pursued unceasingly by the West since the unilateral currency reform ordered by the Americans in 1948 cut Germany into two separate states. And that objective is to restore up to the Oder Neisse line a state in which all the elements that backed Hitler are back in power. And after that, the peace of the world is to rest perilously on the pledge of the West German government that they will not attempt to restore the old frontiers by force, while the ex-Nazis and their friends repeat the methods of their departed leader. After all, that was exactly what Doenitz advised his friends to do when he called for a surrender to the Western powers.

It is against this background one must judge the Soviet counter-proposal for talks between the two German Republics. The rearmament of Western Germany and the creation of a voluntary army in the Democratic Republic and the integration of the planned economy of the German Democratic Republic with other socialist countries, means that the task of achieving unity is going to be long and difficult. But there is no other way.

Because the Western powers know that all-German talks would give encouragement to the very powerful forces in Western Germany who seek genuine unity, and these forces will defeat the ban on the Communist Party, they resist at every point any suggestion of giving the slightest recognition to the German Democratic Republic. When the government of the German Democratic Republic, after being refused representation at the Suez conference, asked for visas to send observers, the Foreign Office retorted with studied

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insolence that since Her Majesty's Government did not recognise 'this organisation' it could not grant visas.

But 'this organisation' happens to represent eighteen million people and a state where the foundations of a socialist economy are already yielding substantial results. The path of the progressive forces in Eastern Germany has not been easy. They had to build not on the initiative of a people's revolution but on a people poisoned and disillusioned by years of fascism. They suffered and paid the penalty for the tragic errors of the last years of the Stalin period. Inevitably, the existence in Western Berlin, right in the centre of their country, of the headquarters of sabotage and espionage organisations, led to panic and many injustices. (In Berlin in July this year a U.S. 'hate balloon' was hanging over the city all day as I talked this problem over with officials of the German Democratic Republic.)

But in Eastern Germany today, there is a feeling of achievement. Industry and agriculture, based on socialist planning, are moving forward. Eastern Germany, with reserves of skill quite as imposing as those of the Federal Republic, is particularly able to integrate its economy with the rest of the socialist world. At the moment, many problems still have to be overcome. For example, there is fierce competition for technicians with Western Germany and each side is offering incentives. The need to offer these encouragements creates opposition among the less skilled and the unskilled whose standards are still low.

I found during my last visit many examples of trade union leaders getting out of touch with the workers and a prevalence of bureaucracy which was sometimes alarming. But the encouraging fact is that a growing section of the people are now taking the solution of these problems as their personal concern. Moreover, the other socialist countries are well aware that success of socialist planning in Eastern Germany is of vital importance to the whole world situation. The leaders of the cold war policies in the West understand just as clearly that if eighteen million Germans succeed in building a steadily improving standard of life on the basis of socialism, they will change the whole world situation. At the moment they seek to deny the existence of this section of the German people, but they cannot do that for ever.

During the last twelve months delegations representing varied sections of the British people have visited Eastern Germany. Many business firms have secured valuable orders at the Leipzig Fairs,

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despite the refusal of the government to give them any assistance. The barriers are being broken down and as they fall there will come a growing understanding that the German Democratic Republic, where the forces creating Nazism have been destroyed, is a force for peace in Europe.

Nearly two years ago, the Co-operative Party declared that the two German Republics must both be brought into discussions on the German problem. That is the only possible approach and until this is understood, the perils of a divided Germany and a divided Europe will hang over the world.

In the meantime the most urgent and elementary duty of working class solidarity places on us all the obligation to see that the strength of the British labour, trade union and co-operative movement is exerted to end the ban on the Communist Party of Germany and restore the elementary rights of working class political organisation in Western Germany. We know the cost of the consequences which this banning of the German Communist Party brought under Hitler, when it led to the end of all democratic liberty in Germany and a destructive war without parallel for all the peoples of Europe. We have been warned.

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

A CONFERENCE IN 1931

What is the significance of the formation of a National Government? Why has British capitalism been driven off the Gold Standard? How can the revolutionary working class best advance in its fight against the National Government? These are some of the questions which immediately arise in any political discussion today.

The *Labour Monthly* feels sure that its readers will welcome the decision, of which this is a preliminary announcement, to hold a conference or conferences of readers of the *Labour Monthly* at the beginning of next month on the economic crisis and the political situation. It takes this opportunity of issuing an invitation to its readers to attend such a conference.* It intends to provide one or two openers to the discussion who will deal with the situation from various aspects. But it wishes to emphasise that it hopes that its readers will regard the conference as an open forum for the free expression of opinion on all aspects of the subject from the point of view of the revolutionary working class.

From *An Announcement*, October, 1931.

*The Conference was held (following a postponement owing to the General Election) on Sunday, December 13, 1931, at Swinton House, Grays Inn Road, London, under the chairmanship of R. O. Bridgeman.

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Books Reviews

RESISTANCE IN THE U.S.A.

U.S.A. Today, by Helen and Scott Nearing. (254 pp. Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine. $2.25.)

TO one who has a knowledge of the left wing movement in the U.S.A. Scott Nearing is no stranger. This reviewer first heard of him back in the 1918-22 period. Throughout all these years, he has consistently adhered to the goal of a socialist America and always has had a positive outlook upon the socialist sector of the world. Jointly with Helen Nearing, he now adds another book, *U.S.A. Today* to the fifteen previously written. It is based upon three cross-country car trips in the United States, occupying in all 16 months, from October, 1952, to May, 1955. They travelled over 50,000 miles, through 47 states and held about 600 meetings. Most of their meetings were small and in homes. 'Only a situation which we considered, and still consider, urgent, led us to leave a comfortable home in New England for a vagrant gypsy life of one-night stands, extending through months and years'.

The entire book is written in the scholarly manner characteristic of Nearing, but in some of its descriptive chapters it suffers from the influences of certain 'anti-modern' phobias, which reflect 20 years of life on a subsistence farm in their beloved New England. The book is especially strong and interesting in its handling of the general perspectives of American imperialism, the economic situation and the effect of the Cold War on the domestic scene. They give a fascinating description of the changed America that was almost 'unrecognisable' compared with '1923 or 1933 or even 1948'. How startling was it for this school teacher-statistician-economist, who had delivered thousands of lectures from coast to coast, to receive letters saying:

> I am sorry I can't lend a hand. I know I would be socially ostracised if I did. As it is, I am barely tolerated, because I talk consumer co-ops.

or even worse to be told

> It is with much regret and embarrassment that I am forced to decline the pleasure of your visit to my home . . . I am unable to entertain friends and associates when there is any likelihood of liberal or progressive views being expressed. If it were possible for me to leave home and visit with you at another location, I should be most happy to do that.

The description of the development of the United States oligarchy, its pro-fascist characteristics, and the social forces that are carrying U.S. imperialism to disaster and destruction is sound and makes interesting reading. The entire last part, entitled 'The Tide Will Turn', emphasises their confidence in the future. They write:

> The world is not going Washington's way. Its closest allies are not following the American Oligarchy. The Communist 'enemy' is going in an entirely different direction. And the important in-between segment of the human family (whose spokesmen met at Bandung) are increasingly anti The America Century. Definitely the world is now out of Washington's hands, if it ever was in it.

The weakness of the book, reflecting Nearing's organisational aloofness, is the failure to portray a positive rôle of the American people, and especially of labour, in bringing

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about decisive change. In fact, in certain sections of the book the reader gets the feeling of pessimism and lack of confidence in the American people. This is particularly true of the chapter entitled 'Social Decay in the United States', which concludes a one-sided description of life among the American people by stating, 'We may be living in a community which is passing from adolescence to senescence without enjoying an interval of maturity'.

A redeeming feature, reflecting the contradictions that are ever present in the U.S. as well as his own discerning faculty, is the chapter entitled 'The American Resistance'. In their own interesting way, they describe the existing though scattered forces who have fought and are fighting 'The Drive to Conformity'. They point out that 'the principles and precepts on which the Resistance is based have had a long career historically and enjoy more than lip service of multitudes of American citizens', and though there are people of different ideas and ideals, together 'the Resistance will play an important part in shaping events of the immediate future'.

In the effort to give a brief overall historic survey and estimate of the U.S.A. Oligarchy and its rôle in the world, the Nearings fall into errors of over-simplification, and inaccuracy. They talk of the entire period of development between 1870 and 1940 as 'the pattern of fascism'. Later, they group together Presidents Wilson, Hoover, F. D. Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, as 'anti-Communist' and 'based upon the Right' without any differentiation as to their respective rôles, domestically or internationally. The reader gets the impression that since 1912 the Oligarchy, through its tactic of a 'United Front from the Right', has

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won 'a decisive ascendancy in this struggle' and 'gained the ideological and political support of the middle classes and established effective control over the organised farmers and organised workers'. While there are elements of truth in this analysis, it is over-simplified. It omits the deep-going experiences and struggles of the Hungry Thirties and the historical growth of a mass trade union movement and the big struggles the workers have engaged in, and the present transformation — however slow—from trade union, to class, consciousness. Though the book thus suffers from the inherent weaknesses of those, who, while claiming to be Marxists, refuse to join in an organised political party to fight for their ideas and ideals, it is nevertheless a worthwhile contribution to a better undertanding of present - day America. Scott Nearing's honesty and integrity over the years, combined with his consistent propaganda for a free, peaceful, democratic and socialist America, again finds expression in *U.S.A. Today*:

> The tide is turning, and will continue to turn . . . as the tides of history repeatedly have cleared the beaches for a new outlook and a fresh start.

JOHN WILLIAMSON

A DOCTOR IN THE SOVIET UNION

Window on Moscow by Maurice Miller. (102 pp. Lawrence & Wishart, *5s. 6d.*).

MAURICE MILLER is a doctor and a trained observer. He gives us the benefit of his very shrewd and unbiased observations and allows us to form our own judgments on the basis of these and not his own opinions. In fact, the only time he categorically sets forth an opinion is on page 57 where he says 'I do not share the political beliefs of the Soviet Union'. This forthright avowal should surely lend additional weight to his findings among those who are like-minded, but realise that this is no justification for remaining in abysmal ignorance of how people live in the Soviet Union. Like other visitors, he correctly observes that the plumbing and electrical wiring in Soviet modern flats is generally inferior to our own. But that does not so jaundice his approach that he fails to describe the advanced standards of Soviet medicine and surgery, the emphasis on preventive medicine, the care of physically handicapped children and the fact that there is no such thing as a 'Waiting List' for operative treatment. Much of the liveliness of *Window on Moscow* springs from the fact that Dr. Miller sallied forth independently, visiting synagogues, churches, restaurants, shops, making notes and — taking photographs. These greatly add to the value of the book and as I looked at the author, surrounded by young pioneers in Tashkent and remembered, that he has a vested interest in peace in the shape of his own three children, I felt that here was indeed an outstanding example of the value of such visits in spreading truth.

MARJORIE POLLITT.

Editorial Note

A further instalment of the Marx family letters has been unavoidably held over. They will be resumed next month.

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many casualties are bound to occur. As long as Labour is led by men who are determined not to be in the casualty lists, capitalism is safe from its assaults.' He put forward several reasons for it, some of which were questioned in the resulting controversy for which *L.M.* provided a forum for the first time. A conclusion he drew with an aptness for today was that it demanded 'real working-class education — not merely classes and lectures, but the turning of every possible trade union branch, trades council, shop stewards' committee, or other labour body, into a centre of Socialist planning and discussion—a place in which the strategy of the next phases of the struggle is being worked out by the rank and file themselves.' In this number, thirty-five years and and three months after, there is an examination on page 452 of G. D. H. Cole's latest pamphlet, the Notes *Labour Into Battle*, and an announcement of our Discussion Forum, all of which should be, in today's conditions, a valuable step forward in that 'real working-class education'—leading to action for a decisive change.

More about Chartists

MY note last month about the Chartist John Frost greatly pleased one reader, whose great-uncle 'was one of the 1848 Chartists. When I was a boy, he used to tell us a lot about the "Hungry 'Forties" and the Chartists of Northampton'. An eighty-year old plasterer friend of mine, of typical London Irish family, told me how his shoemaker father-in-law would play the pipes and sing Chartist songs every Saturday night, until he died at a great age. Our country is full of riches of more than one kind, waiting for this generation to make fully their own.

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